

PRE-ELEMENTARY EDUCATION LONGITUDINAL STUDY  
**PEELS PROGRESS**

*Notes*

NCSEER 2010-3001

**FINDINGS**

*Parents of a child with a low-incidence disability were more likely than parents of a child with a learning disability, speech or language impairment, or developmental delay to report participating in Individualized Education Program/Individualized Family Services Plan (IEP/IFSP) meetings.*



*Teacher reports of the frequency of communication with parents varied by children's age group. Significantly fewer teachers of 5-year-olds reported communicating weekly with parents than teachers of 3-year-olds and teachers of 4-year-olds.<sup>1</sup>*



*Preschoolers with Disabilities:  
A Look at Parent Involvement*

The Pre-Elementary Education Longitudinal Study (PEELS) has been examining the preschool and early elementary school experiences of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children with disabilities. The study followed a nationally representative sample of more than 3,000 children who received preschool special education services until 2009, when they were ages 8 through 10.

This *PEELS Progress Notes* presents emerging findings related to parent involvement in their child's educational program. Further information on the methodology of the study can be found in Carlson et al. (2008).

**Disability profile of children ages 3 through 5: School year 2003–04**

Disability	%
Speech or language impairment	47.0
Developmental delay	27.0
Autism	7.2
Low-incidence disability	6.1
Mental retardation	4.5
Learning disability	2.4
Other health impairment	2.7
Orthopedic impairment	2.0
Emotional disturbance	1.2
Total	100.0

NOTE: Number of preschoolers in data analysis = 3,008. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

<sup>1</sup> Chi-squares were performed to examine statistically significant differences across subgroups. If the chi-square was significant at  $p < .05$ , a *t*-test for dependent samples was conducted to examine differences between groups.

## Data Sources

Data in this document were obtained from two sources:

- **PEELS Wave 1 parent interviews.** A parent/guardian of each child in the sample was asked to complete a 1-hour computer-assisted telephone interview about his or her child's health and disability, behavior, school programs and services, special education and related services, child care, and out-of-school activities. Respondents also were asked a series of questions about their household, its resources, and their family background. The response rate for the 2003–04 parent interview was 96 percent.<sup>2</sup>
- **PEELS Wave 1 teacher questionnaire.** Researchers used either the *Early Childhood Teacher Questionnaire* or *Kindergarten Teacher Questionnaire* to ask teachers about each child's experiences in the class or program. Questionnaire items addressed classroom staffing and materials, children's interactions with nondisabled peers, and children's transitions in and out of their current programs. They also included items about each child's primary disability. In 2003–04, the overall response rate for teachers was 79 percent.<sup>3</sup>

*Note:* Data collection instruments can be found at [www.peels.org](http://www.peels.org).

## Degree of Parent Involvement

Based on teacher data from the 2003–04 school year, 45 percent ( $S.E. = 1.9$ )<sup>4</sup> of parents were *very involved* in their child's school and classroom; 39 percent ( $S.E. = 1.6$ ) of parents were *fairly involved*; and 14 percent ( $S.E. = 1.3$ ) of parents were *somewhat involved*. Two percent ( $S.E. = 0.4$ ) of parents were reported to be *uninvolved* in their child's school and classroom.

### Parent Involvement with IEPs or IFSPs

In 2003–2004, parents reported on participation in IEP or IFSP meetings. Eighty-four percent ( $S.E. = 1.2$ ) of parents reported participating in the IEP or IFSP meeting, and 70 percent ( $S.E. = 1.8$ ) of parents reported that they established IEP/IFSP goals together with school staff.

Some variations in parent reports of IEP/IFSP meeting participation were observed based on race/ethnicity, household income, and child's disability.

- **Race/ethnicity.** Parent reports of participation in IEP/IFSP meetings varied significantly by race/ethnicity. Parents of White, non-Hispanic children (88 percent,  $S.E. = 1.2$ ) were significantly more likely than parents of Black (76 percent,  $S.E. = 2.9$ ) or Hispanic (76 percent,  $S.E. = 2.5$ ) children to report that they participated in IEP/IFSP meetings.
- **Household income.** Parent reports of participation in IEP/IFSP meetings significantly varied by household income. Parents in higher income households were more likely to report that they participated in IEP/IFSP meetings than those in lower income households. For example, 90 percent of children in families with a household income greater than \$40,000 had parents who reported participating ( $S.E. = 1.1$ ), whereas 76 percent of children in families with a household income of \$20,000 or less indicated participating ( $S.E. = 2.8$ ).
- **Disability.** Parent reports of participation in IEP/IFSP meetings varied significantly by disability category. Parents of a child identified as having a low-incidence disability (defined in the study as including children with visual impairments, hearing impairments, deaf-blindness, and traumatic brain injury) were more likely to report that they had participated in IEP meetings (94 percent,  $S.E. = 1.7$ ) than parents of a child identified as having a learning disability (76 percent,  $S.E. = 4.1$ ), speech or language impairment (81 percent,  $S.E. = 1.57$ ), or developmental delay (86 percent,  $S.E. = 1.53$ ).

### Parent Reports of Their Involvement in School and Classroom Events

During the 2003–04 school year, parents of preschoolers with disabilities reported participating in a range of school and classroom events, including:

- Attended parent-teacher conferences (78 percent,  $S.E. = 1.1$ ).
- Attended a general school or program meeting (76 percent,  $S.E. = 1.3$ ).
- Attended a special school or class event (53 percent,  $S.E. = 1.8$ ).

<sup>2</sup> The response rates in this report are for the final Wave 1 data reported in Carlson et al. (2008), not the preliminary Wave 1 data reported in Markowitz et al. (2006).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>  $S.E.$  = standard error.

- Volunteered in their child’s classroom for at least 30 minutes (46 percent, *S.E.* = 1.4).
- Helped with a field trip or other special event (46 percent, *S.E.* = 1.8).
- Helped with fundraising activities (46 percent, *S.E.* = 1.5).
- Participated in policy making or planning groups (21 percent, *S.E.* = 1.0).

**Teacher Reports of Communication with Parents**

During the 2003–04 school year, teachers of preschoolers with disabilities reported contact with the child’s parents by phone, in person, or in writing, as follows:

- 37 percent, once a week (*S.E.* = 1.8).
- 27 percent, a few times a month (*S.E.* = 1.4).
- 21 percent, once a month (*S.E.* = 1.2).
- 16 percent, less than once a month (*S.E.* = 1.7).
- Less than 1 percent, never.

For the school year 2003–2004, teacher reports of the frequency of communication with parents varied by age cohort. Teachers of 5-year-olds were less likely to report weekly contact with parents (30 percent, *S.E.* = 3.1) than teachers of 3-year-olds (45 percent, *S.E.* = 2.2) and teachers of 4-year-olds (41 percent, *S.E.* = 2.2).

**References Cited in this Report**

Carlson, E., Daley, T., Bitterman, A., Riley, J., Keller, B., Jenkins, F., & Markowitz, J. (2008). *Changes in the characteristics, services, and performance of preschoolers with disabilities from 2003–04 to 2004–05, Wave 2 overview report from the Pre-Elementary Education Longitudinal Study*. Rockville, MD: Westat. Available at [www.peels.org](http://www.peels.org).

Markowitz, J., Carlson, E., Frey, W., Riley, J., Shimshak, A., Heinzen, H., Strohl, J., Lee, H., & Klein, S. (2006). *Preschoolers’ characteristics, services, and results: Wave 1 overview report from the Pre-Elementary Education Longitudinal Study*. Rockville, MD: Westat. Available at [www.peels.org](http://www.peels.org).

**Percentage of teachers who reported how often they communicated with a child’s parents, by child’s age: School year 2003–04**


Age 3	2003–04
At least once a week	44.7
A few times a month	27.9
About once a month	17.9
Less than once a month	9.4
Never	†

Age 4	
At least once a week	40.7
A few times a month	26.2
About once a month	18.5
Less than once a month	14.4
Never	0.2

Age 5	
At least once a week	30.4
A few times a month	26.5
About once a month	23.6
Less than once a month	19.5
Never	†

† Reporting standards not met due to insufficient sample size.

NOTE: Number of preschoolers in analysis = 2,011. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding.

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